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City of Barrie

Final

Community Safety Committee

Tuesday, September 19, 2023 | **6:00 PM** | **Council Chamber/Virtual**

COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT
For consideration by General Committee on October 18, 2023

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Councillor, S. Morales at 6:01 p.m. The following were in attendance for the meeting:

Present: 4 - Mayor, A. Nuttall
Deputy Mayor, R. Thomson
Councillor, S. Morales
Councillor, A. Courser

ALSO PRESENT:
Councillor, C. Riepma
Councillor, C. Nixon
Councillor, A.M. Kungl
Councillor, N. Nigussie
Councillor, G. Harvey
Councillor, J. Harris
Councillor, B. Hamilton.

COUNTY OF SIMCOE STAFF PRESENT:
Director of Community Programs, W. Hembruff
Manager of Community and Program Development, L. D'Ambrosio
Manager of Social and Community Services, M. Fayez-Bahgat.

STAFF:
Associate Director of Communications and Customer Services, C. Harris
Chief Administrative Officer, M. Prowse
Deputy City Clerk, T. McArthur
Director of Corporate Facilities, R. Pews
Director of Information Technology, R. Nolan
Director of Operations, D. Friary
Executive Assistant to the Mayor, E. Chappell
Executive Director of Access Barrie, R. James-Reid
General Manager of Community and Corporate Services, D. McAlpine
General Manager of Infrastructure and Growth Management, B. Araniyasundaran

Legislative Coordinator, T. Maynard
Manager of Strategic Initiatives Policy and Analysis, J. Roberts.
Planner, L. Juffermans
Service Desk Generalist, K. Kovacs.

The Community Safety Committee met for the purpose of a Public Meeting at 6:01 p.m.

Councillor, S. Morales advised the public that any concerns that were the subject of the Public Meeting should be directed to the Legislative and Court Services Department.

PUBLIC MEETING - MOTION 23-A-052, CONCERNING OPTIONS TO ADDRESS CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN THE CITY OF BARRIE

Councillor, S. Morales advised that the purpose of the public meeting is to provide members of the Community an opportunity to provide comments concerning chronic homelessness in the City of Barrie.

Michael Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer provided a presentation concerning Council approved motion 23-A-052 regarding options to address chronic homelessness in the City of Barrie.

Mr. Prowse discussed slides concerning the following topics:

- The County of Simcoe designation as homelessness prevention service manager by Province of Ontario and the City's role and limitations;
- Council's resolution related to options to address chronic homelessness in the City;
- The request to the Province of Ontario for funding;
- An overview of the family reunification fund;
- The County of Simcoe and City of Barrie partnership for Cooling and Warming Centres;
- The municipality's funding to support food security programs;
- The Mobile Outreach Pilot Program in Downtown Barrie;
- The proposed changes to City of Barrie By-laws;
- Public Education related to panhandling; and
- The City of Barrie's housing pledge.

Members of Committee asked a number of questions of City staff and the County of Simcoe and received responses.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

1. **Joan Kelso** commented that she is in attendance to express her fear and concerns regarding the Downtown Barrie area. Ms. Kelso stated that she has been a resident of Barrie since 1989 and lived and owned property in the downtown core since 1999. She commented that she and her husband own various properties in the downtown, including office space and rooming houses. Ms. Kelso expressed that she cares about her tenants and their right to live safely and peacefully and not be subjected to the drugs, loitering, and violence

taking place close to their homes. She commented that the Barrie Police Service should also be enforcing the laws.

Ms. Kelso expressed that those who are unhoused and unruly are a problem and that we are turning a blind eye to unlawful individuals who display no common decency or respect for their surroundings or community. She noted that the downtown used to be a pleasant area to live and work but that this is no longer the case. Ms. Kelso stated that everything changed for the worse when the Busby Centre relocated to Mulcaster Street in 2014 and that since this time, she has regularly observed open drug use on the lawn of the courthouse, people travelling back and forth to the methadone clinic to obtain and then sell drugs on the street, discarded needles, and solicitation.

Ms. Kelso commented that residents are reluctant to move into their downtown condos as they are afraid to walk downtown, and that new residents have witnessed overdoses from their balconies. She noted that the patrons of the Running Room are afraid to walk to their cars at night and that an overdose occurred on the front lawn of her husband's office two weeks ago at 8 a.m. and was witnessed by one of his employees. She further noted that defecation has occurred on front lawns in the area and expressed that Council needs to take action to help all residents of Barrie.

Ms. Kelso stated that the tenants living at her Macdonald Street property are afraid and that some tenants have lived there for 15 plus years. She noted that the loitering at the corner of McDonald and Mulcaster Streets is out of control and that her property on Mulcaster Street has been broken into multiple times. She stated that they have spent thousands of dollars to replace doors and install security systems and cameras while paying significant property taxes as the value of her properties decrease. She questioned why the city allowed the Busby Centre to locate in an area that cannot house the patrons when they are outside. Ms. Kelso called on the City of Barrie and the police to take action to help residents.

Ms. Kelso stated that homelessness is a nation-wide problem. She noted that the City of Timmins is looking to move its shelters away from dense residential and commercial areas, and that the Town of Huntsville has an OPP presence in the downtown that deters loitering and drug use. She also noted that the Province of Alberta is taking a recovery-first approach as the statistics indicate that individuals who are homeless are likely experiencing substance abuse challenges. Ms. Kelso expressed that a residential and day rehabilitation centre is needed in the city of Barrie and shared that her family has personal experience with these issues and has had success with rehabilitation. She concluded by noting that benefits cannot be provided to one segment of the population without considering the rights of others.

2. **Bill Anderson's** name was called but he was not in attendance at the meeting.

3. **Jason O'Neil** commented that he and his wife are owners of McDonald's restaurants and that he wishes to discuss the impact of homelessness on the Dunlop Street McDonald's Restaurant staff members, guests, and overall business. Mr. O'Neil noted that they are a local family that runs a family restaurant where they take care of their team members by providing opportunities for employment in a safe and respectful workplace while offering quality service and food to guests. He expressed that he wishes to describe the impact that the current downtown environment and culture has had on his business, team members, and guests.

   Mr. O'Neil stated that an emergency call to police occurs almost every day due to assaults on team members from unwanted guests, fighting in the dining room or parking lot, open drug use, and the destruction of property. He described the toll this takes on the business, team members, and guests, and commented that significant capital expenses are accrued to help minimize the effects of this behaviour. Mr. O'Neil stated that the negative impact of this behaviour on the people, management team, and employee retention is significant, with business itself and sales being impacted.

   Mr. O'Neil stated that he is at a loss to explain to his staff why unwanted guests who commit acts are taken away one day and then are back the same day or the next day, often without recourse. He commented that he is at a loss to explain to his staff what they are doing as an employer to protecting them in the workplace. Mr. O'Neil expressed that no one should wonder why people are avoiding the downtown and requested a significant holistic approach to protecting team members and guests in the downtown core of the city. He noted that they are open and happy to serve everyone, but that the teams ask that people be respectful.

4. **Lance Chilton** commented that he has been a resident of Barrie since 1998 and currently owns a business in the city. He thanked the Mayor and Council, City staff and the County of Simcoe staff for turning their attention to the most serious problem facing Barrie and many other cities across the continent. Mr. Chilton expressed that didn't want to repeat the experiences of those who work and employ people in the downtown and what they have had to endure because of the issues of homelessness, addiction, and mental health, as this has already been said. He acknowledged that a lot of time and resources are being spent on these issues.

   Mr. Chilton stated that there are two main groups: the vulnerable and unhoused, and the residents of the city who deserve to live safely and feel safe and secure going to work. He noted that his employees have observed crimes being committed while going to and from work and that people have broken in, and camped on his property at night as they thought they were at home. Mr. Chilton expressed that

people need to be kept safe, sound, and warm in whatever manner is possible and that it is just as important for the quality of life that citizens feel safe and secure in their homes, properties, and places of work. He commented that the City has a department of finance, libraries, buses, etc., and that a department on homelessness is needed as the problem is serious. He acknowledged the various committees, agencies, and organizations currently working on this issue and expressed that the problem is significant enough that the City may need to become a manager on this issue. Mr. Chilton concluded by stating that the problem will get out of hand unless it is tackled quickly, decisively, and in a rapid fashion.

5. **Steve Ricalis on behalf of Donaleigh's Irish Public House** name was called but was not in attendance at the meeting.

6. **John Alousis** stated that every time he talks to a resident or business owner, the problem and challenges being faced in the downtown are discussed. He expressed that the challenges of today cannot be the challenges of the future and that we cannot focus on support for social services without an equal focus on the harm they attract by their presence. Mr. Alousis noted that theft, shoplifting, break-ins, vandalism, threats, drug use, loitering, and trespassing are daily acts of lawlessness that have increased drastically since the COVID-19 pandemic ended and the homeless have returned to the downtown to access social services.

   Mr. Alousis noted that the Busby Shelter on Mulcaster Street is virtually surrounded by preexisting residential uses, parks, the library, the courthouse, the Centre for Grieving Children, and City Hall. He further noted that it is a short walking distance to schools, businesses, offices, and the waterfront park system. Mr. Alousis expressed that the Busby Centre strives to achieve noble purposes to assist the needy but that it does so openly ignoring the damage and fear that it has instilled in neighborhood residents and businesses. He stated that the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) of Simcoe County bought the property at 88 and 90 Mulcaster for $1.8 million in 2014 and that last June, the Busby Centre requested $400,000 from the City of Barrie and another 1.2 million from the County of Simcoe to pay for the post COVID-19 pandemic transition from the hotel program back to 88 Mulcaster Street.

   Mr. Alousis stated that the Busby Centre has become a large social enterprise and noted that this past August, the Busby Centre purchased 88 and 90 Mulcaster Street from the CMHA for $4 million dollars with records showing it paid 1.2 million in cash and 2.8 million with a mortgage to Meridian Credit Union. He questioned why it requested transition funding from the City and the County of Simcoe if it had these funds available, if any of the funding provided went towards its purchase of the property, and why the property was not sold to the public on MLS. Mr. Alousis stated that all levels of

government must be accountable for their spending and that in turn the social services who receive funding must also be held accountable.

Mr. Alousis stated that the Busby Centre took over a shelter program that had previously been run seasonally by six churches. He noted that it moved to its location without notice, consultation with, or regard for neighbors in the downtown core. He stated that because of complaints to the City in 2019, Council asked the CMHA and the Busby Centre to meet regularly with neighbours to address the issues and harms that are occurring, with two City Councillors also attending those meetings. Mr. Alousis commented that these meetings ended in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic arrived and that he emailed the CMHA and the Busby Centre in 2021 asking whether these meetings would restart to discuss the construction of a fence and other mitigation strategies. He noted he did not receive a response.

Mr. Alousis commented that last year the Busby Centre was informed of break-ins occurring at residences and businesses in the area. He stated that its response was that it has no authority over people committing illegal acts and that the police are the best line of authority to respond to these matters. Mr. Alousis stated that given this response, he questions how the City plans to fund the police to sufficiently address the rising crime. He expressed that the City and the County have contributed to the harm caused to residents and downtown businesses and that resident property rights have effectively been expropriated and caused injury.

Mr. Alousis commented that the present downtown social services conflict with the goal of ending homelessness. He stated that housing intensification is needed to create affordable housing and that affordable housing is needed to address homelessness. Mr. Alousis expressed that the city has planned for residential intensification in and around the downtown core, but that lawlessness may delay or deter residential intensification and therefore contribute to homelessness. He noted that this is a Catch 22 situation. Mr. Alousis concluded by requesting that the City create a task force comprised of affected residents, businesses, the County of Simcoe, shelter representatives, affordable housing advocates, and first responders to review the current plans and policies for dealing with homelessness and lawlessness. He expressed that the situation is urgent and that all parties need to work together to reach a holistic solution that brings the greatest amount of good with the least amount of harm to all residents of Barrie.

7. **Craig Stevens** introduced himself as the Executive Director of the Downtown Barrie BIA. He commented that it is difficult to say that it is getting harder and harder to keep their heads up as they make their way through the downtown. He expressed that despite this, they are staying positive and continuing to make investments in the public realm because there are local Mainstreet businesses at stake. Mr.

Stevens stated that as an event facilitator, the BIA has experienced six overdoses and counting during family events in Meridian Place over the past few weeks, and even more overdoses and deaths in downtown alleys. He noted that the BIA has contemplated cancelling events for the safety and well-being of its staff and attendees. Mr. Stevens commented that it is not a matter of making people aware of the situation, but a matter of how we can come together to find solutions.

Mr. Stevens stated that the new initiatives that have been implemented by Council are believed by the BIA board to be a success. He expressed that the BIA would like to see the following initiatives continued and/or expanded: the two Barrie Police Service officers dedicated to the downtown; the County of Simcoe One Community Solutions Pilot Project which has been on site for six of the overdoses and responsible for two lives saved; the City of Barrie operations staff dedicated to picking up garbage; the uniformed police officers paired with RVH; the non-uniformed police offer paired with a mental health professional; the BPS instruction to route through downtown while on shift; and, the moratorium on prisoner release drop off in Barrie for those who are not from Barrie.

Mr. Stevens noted that the BIA has implemented health and safety event measures because of the six overdoses in Meridian Place, including additional security personnel dedicated to Meridian Place during public events, and a public event email sent to all first responders with a request for staff to be on alert. Mr. Stevens concluded by emphasizing that as a community partner, the BIA is able to offer assistance within the scope of its mandate and that it is here to help focus on achieving collaborative solutions.

8. **Gerry Jeffrey** commented that her family has lived on Mulcaster and Worsley Streets for almost 70 years and that they have seen a lot of changes over the years but nothing like what has occurred in the past few years. She expressed that it has become scary for those who live in the area, including herself and her tenants, and that she has personally been accosted a few times with the police needing to be called. She stated that she regularly picks up garbage and has found used needles on the lawn. Ms. Jeffrey commented that she was on a committee with the Busby Centre, neighborhood residents, and local councillors which would meet once a month to discuss issues and look for solutions.

Ms. Jeffrey commented that the Busby Centre had a sandwich board sign placed at the entrance of its building outlining the expectations of clients, including being a good neighbor and no drug use. She commented that she sees drug use occurring on a regular basis directly outside the Busby Centre. She stated that she was told by a Busby Centre staff person that an employee of the Centre would be outside with clients but that she does not believe this is taking place. Ms. Jeffrey expressed that based on what she has seen and heard,

she believes that the Busby Centre is in over their heads and that they do not know how to deal with the number of people in such a small space. She noted that this is part of the problem. Ms. Jeffrey concluded by stating that all people should be handled with kindness and respect but noted her concerns when people are scared and cross the road, so they don't have to walk in front of the Busby Centre.

9. **Drew Dekker** commented that he is a local business owner on Bayfield Street and is from a Dutch family. He expressed that the Dutch have a term called 'gedogen' which loosely translates to 'tolerance', where police abstain from bringing charges for certain acts. He stated that under the gedogen policy the greater good yields to an identifiable greater cause and that the Dutch practice of decriminalization is well known. Mr. Dekker commented that the City of Helsinki is working on a housing first policy and that it is on track to eliminate homelessness by 2025. He noted that under this policy, everyone is given a home and participates in a program to get back on their feet. He highlighted that Helsinki is safe, the economy is booming, and people living on the streets are not tolerated. He expressed that this works because tolerance has limits.

Mr. Dekker continued that over the years it has been realized that excessive tolerance is not a virtue and that the lack of standing for boundaries doesn't solve anything. He quoted the saying "if you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything" and commented that if we continue to tolerate more, we are going to be on the receiving end of more of it. Mr. Dekker expressed that what is coming from a place of goodness is only exacerbating the problem and that what comes from a well-meaning place backfires tragically when limits are not set. He commented that as much as the path of addiction and mental health problems destroys the lives of addicts and their families, so does enabling and tolerating the behavior when it eventually ends up on our streets. He expressed that left to its own devices, this will also necrotize our own community and he requested that Council stop doing things that make it worse.

Mr. Dekker clarified that not everybody who is upset about homelessness and addictions is mean. He noted that this is often labeled nimbyism and clarified that these are not uncompassionate people as most people want troubled people dealt with humanely. He expressed that people are in attendance because of people defecating in the middle of intersections, and home invasions. Ms. Dekker described visiting his brother's house and observing an individual walking with a brick and smashing car windows in the driveway after driveway. He stated that yesterday an assault rifle was confiscated in the Downtown. Mr. Dekker questioned when enough is going to be enough and what is going to need to happen for it to be enough.

Mr. Dekker expressed that Barrie is not the wild west and that the

public is not being mean but that they have an equal right to live in a lawful city where there are not two sets of laws. He stated that people should have the right to walk our streets while not feeling that they are in danger and that this is a fundamental right that those in a community should have. Mr. Dekker expressed that tolerance needs to have limits and boundaries and cautioned that adding band-aids and police that offer the wrong types of services will only enable and exacerbate the problem. He commented that no one in this room has the answers and that there is no easy solution, but that the status quo and building more capacity is not going to solve the problem. He expressed that residents are in attendance because they care but that they are also fed up. Mr. Dekker concluded by stating that setting boundaries in our tolerances and sticking to them needs to happen before things get worse. He expressed that if we fail to set a line we will fail and that a set of standards and a line in the sand for what the decorum is and needs to be established. He stated that it was time for a new approach.

10. **Jason Beattie** commented that he has had the opportunity to spend his entire life in the Downtown Core. He noted that he took a few years to travel and live in different places, such as Buffalo, New York, Los Angeles, the Philippines, and Vancouver, and that he has seen things that work and don't. He expressed that homelessness, poverty, and drug use are not a Barrie problem but an international problem. Mr. Beattie stated that he moved back to Barrie and wishes to build roots here and a future with his wife, but he acknowledged the downtown core has changed. He commented that the City wants intensification, growth, prosperity, and to attract businesses for job creation and tax dollars and that this, in turn, generates different services. He noted that each component feeds the other.

Mr. Beattie commented that the programs of six churches have been combined and are now run by the Busby Centre. He expressed that this has led to a concentration of drug use and homelessness in the downtown core. He expressed his disappointment with the lack of transparency and community involvement concerning the Busby Centre and stated that the Busby Centre does not inform the community and continues to make decisions without community consultation, such as the purchase of the building next to its current location. He expressed that the expansion of the Busby Centre has blindsided the community and that this represents an irresponsible action.

Mr. Beattie spoke about homelessness and drug use, and its relationship with mental health. He expressed that he does not want to diminish the plight of those experiencing homelessness but that he wishes to highlight the responsibility of Council to the community members impacted by the open drug use and the unsafe neighborhoods that are being created as a result. He noted that the Busby Centre has made promises to the community in the past and has not fulfilled them, such as the proposed building of a fence. Mr.

Beattie commented that drug use is allowed to happen on the Busby and City property and described that this evening when driving past the Busby Centre to attend this public meeting, he saw open drug use and people sleeping on cardboard boxes outside the front door. He expressed that this does not make people feel safe and that it demonstrates that the Busby Centre cannot effectively manage its space and population. He further expressed that for Busby to expand its operations in light of this is not fair to the people they serve or the community it operates in.

Mr. Beattie commented that the concentration of services in the singular location of the Busby Centre creates an unsafe environment for both the people using it and the community. He stated that those at the Busby Centre without drug problems are being exposed to it daily and that users are brought to the Busby Centre and are concentrated in a singular location which is bringing crime and all the things that come with it. Mr. Beattie questioned whether the City has calculated the total cost to the community as a result of the Busby Centre, such as the cost of the security systems for businesses and homes in the area. He noted that there are full-time security guards at downtown banks and the library and questioned whether families can feel safe attending library programs when a security guard is needed at the front door.

Mr. Beattie commented that he sees community members picking up drug paraphernalia and needles and that police attended his wife's business and advised that the doors should always be locked, staff members should carry whistles, and a panic button should be installed at the front desk. He expressed dismay with these requests being made of businesses that are trying to provide jobs to the community. He stated that the police interact with these individuals who are being disruptive and noted that these individuals are known to the police. He commented that he has seen individuals stealing from teenagers and throwing rocks at them, verbal aggression, and trespassing. Mr. Beattie concluded by expressing that it is fine to have goals for the growth and intensification of the city but that the city needs to be built for everyone.

11. **Melissa Conte** commented that she is speaking based on her experiences as a young female lawyer working on Mulcaster Street and the experiences of her female staff members. She stated that she came to the area ten years ago as a young summer student at a law firm where she began delivering documents to other law firms. She expressed that during this time she was always vigilant but never left the office being fearful of being yelled at, chased down the street, or having attempts made to grab her purse. Ms. Conte stated that today, a typical walk down Mulcaster and Collier Streets to the banks regularly includes sidestepping alcohol bottles and drug paraphernalia on sidewalks, being approached and screamed at with nonsensical language and profanities, having to run away or walk

quickly as they are continuously monitoring their surroundings. She highlighted that what is most concerning is that during the past few months, there have been groups of individuals congregated together on the sidewalks essentially blocking access to pedestrians.

Ms. Conte expressed that she no longer feels comfortable driving along McDonald Street as she has been forced to stop her vehicle by people unwilling to move from the middle of the roadway and people running across the roadway without regard for approaching vehicles. She stated that next Wednesday will mark one year since the date that one of her staff members encountered an intruder that viscously knocked down the back door to their office. She noted that from this point forward, they experienced the beginning of a marked sense of uneasiness with leaving the boundaries of their office. Ms. Conte commented that have experienced an intruder in their back parking lot and those trying to open their car doors and the front door of their office. She noted that they must redirect clients due to barefoot trespassers at their office building and that each and every day they quickly lock the front door for safety reasons the moment after clients enter the office.

Ms. Conte described a phone call from a distressed staff member early one morning regarding the police, firefighters, and paramedics in the driveway of their office reviving an individual who had overdosed. She stated they reviewed their security cameras which showed two individuals meeting up, sitting on the front steps of their office and smoking something. She described that instantly one individual was on the ground struggling to breath. Ms. Conte expressed that she is tired of this, and that meaningful change is necessary to protect Barrie residents and employees. She further expressed those feelings of uneasiness at merely opening a door or exiting a vehicle, and the persistent sounds of sirens should not be expected as new normal in the city of Barrie.

Ms. Conte read the following comments on behalf of the owners of Donaleigh's and Front Street Diner:

- Described their struggle over the last three years against rapidly increasing excessive drug use in downtown Barrie and is embarrassing as both a business owner and resident of the City.
- Employees walk their properties daily to pick up needles and drug tools and deal with the results of this behaviour on a daily basis, such as people passing out and harassing residents and visitors.
- Questioned how they and small business owners are supposed to attract regular and first-time visitors to the downtown core in the current environment and noted that this is a fight they have been losing for years.
- Questioned why anyone would want to bring their families to the Downtown for dinner only to experience drug use in alleys.
- Women must be walked to their cars only to find them broken into

by people getting high in their cars.

- Incidents taking place more than once and questioning what would have happened if these girls were alone and not with someone to help remove these people.
- Too many close calls and overdoses and expressed the need to create a safe space and downtown for everyone, noting that if this doesn't occur, people will stop coming into the downtown, and businesses will have no choice but to close.
- The downtown core is the heartbeat of every city and it is imperative that drastic steps be taken to make the downtown safe and become a destination once again.

Public Comments - Speakers 12 - 28

12. **Cheryl Russell** commented that she is originally from Toronto and has lived in Barrie for the past 16 years with her husband and children. She expressed that they have enjoyed their family and work life in Barrie and are very appreciative of Barrie's well-planned public and green spaces. She stated that her family lives within walking distance of the downtown and waterfront and that they enjoy Barrie's parks and waterfront trails. She expressed that she is here tonight to ask Council to continue making planning decisions that benefit the entire community. Ms. Russell commented that community issues need to be addressed while also addressing and safeguarding the interests of businesses. She stated that the downtown is a vibrant business community and that the city needs it.

Ms. Russell expressed that she wishes to share two anecdotes, the first being about her love for the public library, which provides numerous resources to the community. Ms. Russell commented that she joined Monday night book club as it facilitates a means to connect with community members. She described that over the past 10 years, there has been increased loitering outside the main entrance, an increasing number of security guards, bathrooms that are locked, and an increase in lighting and classical music playing outside. She noted that members all started walking each other to their cars. Ms. Russell commented that during the COVID-19 pandemic her book club stopped meeting and that even after restrictions were lifted, the club never met in person again as some members feel safer meeting *via* Zoom. She expressed that she misses being out in the community and meeting with her fellow book club members.

Ms. Russell commented that her second anecdote deals with her work in health care for 15 years. She stated that the first six of these years were spent at the Methadone Clinic located at the Downtown Dispensary on Front and Mississauga Streets in Orillia. She described that in her second year, an enthusiastic owner expanded services and gave the store a facelift and that there were restaurants and a family run bakery nearby. She stated that the Methadone Clinic saw patients every Wednesday and that patients would gather in the

parking lot making it difficult at times for pharmacy patrons to park. She described that altercations with patients would occur and result in police being called, whose presence added to the business concerns of the dispensary. Ms. Russell stated that after several years, she felt the stress of this constant conflict between methadone and dispensary patients and just getting to work. She described a chair being thrown at her one day, after which she chose to work elsewhere in Orillia.

Ms. Russell commented that she recently drove by the Downtown Dispensary and expressed that it now looks neglected with bars on the windows and the nearby bakery and restaurant gone. Ms. Russell expressed that downtown Barrie is vital to the community for many reasons and that it is necessary to understand the needs of all individuals and the convenience of social services being in the downtown core. She concluded by expressing that she does not think a vibrant downtown that is striving to attract patrons can coexist with social services and noted that when both are present, thriving is difficult. She questioned what Council focus and effort is being done to ensure the downtown is vibrant.

13. **Barry Mills** explained that he has a residence not far from city hall. Mr. Mills voiced his opposition to the Busby Centre. Mr. Mills stated that such centralization of homeless services leads to the congregation of individuals from the same unfortunate situations in a singular location and encourages drug-taking and crime. Mr. Mills stated that this was not the case when several churches were handling the helping of the homeless. Mr. Mills shared that he has witnessed drug deals, fights, and break-ins (including his house and car multiple times). Mr. Mills shared that he has lived in Barrie for twenty-two years but no longer feels safe walking to his local park or the downtown core. Mr. Mills stated that the City has spent millions on beautifying the downtown area, but the residential development that is needed to invigorate it will not happen as no one will want to buy a condo in the area. Mr. Mills stated that he does not feel taxpayers are being treated properly. Mr. Mills's suggestion is to diversify the homeless services so that people are subjected to more normal situations and have a chance to expand their horizons.

14. **Linda Jeffrey** stated that her family has lived and owned property in the downtown area for 67 years. As a teenager, Ms. Jeffrey worked on Dunlop Street and would walk home in the dark. Ms. Jeffrey questioned who would let their 16-year-old daughter walk at night in that area now. Ms. Jeffrey shared that she has tenants living in the downtown area and they have reported to her that they have witnessed drug-taking, public indecency, and disorderly conduct. Ms. Jeffrey further shared that there have been several break-ins at her properties, including instances of drug-taking on her property, and her tenants now sleep with baseball bats at their doors. Ms. Jeffrey stated that we all have the right to feel safe, and she questioned what

responsibility she and Council must ensure her tenants' safety. Ms. Jeffrey shared that her daughter-in-law opened a chiropractor business downtown for new mothers and babies. She was visited by the police and advised to put padlocks on the doors, that each chiropractor should carry a panic button, and that there should be an alarm on every desk. Her patients have told her that do not feel safe walking to their cars after dark. Ms. Jeffrey questioned what was being done about their rights. Ms. Jeffrey stated that she has compassion for the homeless population, that she has worked in the fields of mental health and addiction her whole life, and that she understands concurrent disorders. Housing and case management is the gold standard for help, not temporary housing, and not the Busby Centre. Ms. Jeffrey stated that the Busby Centre is overwhelmed with the amount of people that they serve, they have not initiated a conversation with their neighbours, and she questioned why their parking lot is not used for people gathering, instead of the private properties of the neighbours. Ms. Jeffrey suggested that the individuals needing help should be spaced around the city, as having such a large amount of vulnerable people in the one spot makes them an easy target for drug dealers.

15. **Heather Sparks** shared that she has lived in downtown Barrie her whole life. She shared that she does not feel safe and that she barricades herself into her house. Ms. Sparks stated that she and her husband have found people in their yard taking drugs, have found drugs on their property, have had Amazon packages stolen, have experienced people peeking in their windows, throwing garbage into their property, and sleeping in their yard, and are asked constantly for cigarettes or food. Ms. Sparks stated that when asked to move along, people start fights. Ms. Sparks stated that when they call the police, they have to call them numerous times and they will only come if they tell them someone has a weapon, even if they don't. Ms. Sparks questioned if there is a place where homeless people can go to learn how to live, how to cook, learn mechanics, and places they can stay as long as they are working. Ms. Sparks shared that she does not walk downtown as homeless people approach her and she does not feel safe.

16. **Peter Preenan** shared that he moved to the downtown core with his partner 10 years ago and that they used to have people over for BBQs, leave their doors and windows open, and their car doors unlocked. Mr. Preenan stated that things have changed since then and gave the example of his car being rifled through if he leaves it unlocked. Mr. Preenan shared that when he comes home from work, there are people in his backyard, garbage everywhere, something is always missing like flowers or planters, and he has had packages stolen and his windows broken. His partner was assaulted by someone outside of the library and suffered a severe concussion which led to depression, alcoholism, and the breakup of their relationship. Mr. Preenan stated that he did not have any answers but

wanted to share the change he has seen in the last 10 years.

17. **Richard Brisson's** name was called, but he was not in attendance.

18. **Michael Speers** stated that the way people who are experiencing homelessness have been described tonight is disgusting. They are not panhandlers, loiterers, or people who you should be afraid of, they are our neighbours and our friends. Mr. Speers commented that calling the ideology behind the undemocratic motion they are here for tonight abhorrent is an understatement and that nothing on the pages will help homelessness, and instead will attack our neighbours and the most vulnerable in our community. Mr. Speers discussed the failure to properly address the material issues affecting those experiencing homelessness, that it was designed to put the perceived fears of some residents ahead of the very lives of others.

Mr. Speers also commented that the motion is dangerous, cruel, and not what our community is about, parts A and B are so abstract and generic, and that it must be concluded that they were only added to soften the edges of the motion and create the illusion that it was put together actually to help people. Mr. Speers stated that any initiative and attached funding commitments must be made more robust with guaranteed funding numbers and a lot more specifics. He conceded that we do need a lot of these services, like a 24-7 cooling and warming centre. Mr. Speers added that a strong show of support by Council for the consumption and treatment services site should be included as more pressure is required to stop the province from dragging its feet and that part C of the motion improperly labels the work of one community service as outreach and that the motion lacks a definition of the term successful, and it is assumed that the business community and those who serve their interests will likely determine what success means in this regard. Mr. Speers stated that parts D and E have been strongly criticized and widely condemned by people across the country, that it is class warfare, and demonstrates how people in our community are under attack and that the law and order part of the motion is missing is justice. He discussed that justice means not criminalizing people or eliminating the ability of people who have very few options left to survive for another day, week, or month. Justice is giving everyone in our society the housing, food, and resources they need. Mr. Speers commented that he anticipates that people are going to ask how this will be paid for.

Mr. Speers suggested a 10% cut to the police budget, adding that it would be a good way to start getting priorities right in this city, that we need to move beyond a system of exploitation and move away from policies that strip people of their human dignity. Mr. Speers stated that they are not going to tolerate a Council that chooses to deny peoples' worth and refuses to treat everyone with the respect they deserve and that our community must be a place where everyone is safe and supported, where everyone has access to the services they

need.

Mr. Speers provided comments on updating the by-law wording around panhandling and encampments and making it clear that it is okay to help people. He also commented that in the absence of adequate housing, or worse shelter services, we can make it clear that people should not be left alone and should be supported and free to live as they see fit.

Mr. Speers concluded that we need to reiterate that it is the Government's responsibility to take care of all people in this city, not just those deemed worthy. He shared that his son went downtown recently to give out change to people who need it and that even if they make it illegal to do so, he will keep doing so with his assistance.

20. **Russell Tighe** stated that he was here to speak about mental health and that in his experience, mental health and mental illness are two different things and that suffering from fractured mental health leads first to medication, then to addiction, and then to amplified mental illness. Mr. Tighe stated that the end product is hopelessness, homelessness, being, and feeling left alone. Mr. Tighe stated that mental health is the first health everyone should be exercising on a daily basis. Physical health and well-being are the rewards of being centered mentally.

Mr. Tighe shared that the COVID pandemic was the most traumatic time of his life, but that he recovered with help from people. He advised that we are winning some battles by keeping people alive, but sadly we are losing the war. Mr. Tighe shared that he was recently told to leave someone alone who was lying motionless in the middle of the 5 points during a heat advisory and that he had stopped to see if this person needed assistance. Mr. Tighe noted that if had left this person alone, the person would have died.

Mr. Tighe discussed that being alone causes a mental condition that develops into mental illness and that alone builds depression and suicide. He commented that he cannot leave people alone in his path and does what he can as part of a community in crisis. Mr. Tighe stated that his plan is that if an individual is mentally ill, they should be under full-time supervision and cared for by the experts until the individual is better and thriving. Mr. Tighe encouraged everyone to get together and figure out a way where nobody gets left alone again, by working together on all fronts, respecting the process, holding each other accountable, and celebrating the progress achieved.

21 **Melissa Black** discussed that she wanted to share her experiences living in this community since 2007. She shared that she lives near Queen's Park and is the leader of the Neighbourhood Watch. Ms. Black stated that she is not afraid to live in this City, and that everyone here has the right to live in this City in a peaceful manner.

Ms. Black acknowledged her understanding that there are people with mental issues, mental health problems, and other problems that are affecting them economically, socially, and in other ways.

Ms. Black discussed concerns associated with the safety of children in the parks. She commented that she has witnessed prostitution, people suffering from overdosing, and/or violent acts in the park. She advised calling the Barrie Police a number of times and that they either take their time or never show up. Ms. Black shared that last year, an elderly man who goes to the park to pick up empties was attacked by a person high on crystal meth and hit in the head with a hammer. She noted that the person who attacked him has had fifteen other violent offences and was left out on the streets. Ms. Black stated that she wants the parks to be safe for the children, the elderly, for everyone and that this is not a singular incident, it happens everywhere. Ms. Black shared that her brother is a paramedic in Vancouver and deals with overdoses daily and that it has gotten to the point that when they get a call about an overdose, it goes to the back of the line. Ms. Black expressed her hope that this doesn't happen here and that the issues are not going to go away with a silent approach or a lack of concern. Ms. Black advised that she believes everyone should have a home and a safe space and does not believe that people shouldn't be able to live the way they want to, but if it is affecting another person negatively, it needs to be dealt with. Ms. Black commented that the problem in her neighbourhood has increased since the pandemic and that more break-ins into cars, homes, and garages and has increased since the pandemic.

22. **Aaron Neuman, Associate Executive Director, One Church Barrie** introduced himself as the Associate Executive Director of One Church Barrie and explained that his background is in social work and he has worked within shelter systems for several years.

Mr. Neuman stated that among the reports referenced tonight, there has been an oversight in that other organizations that are outside of the general scope have not been acknowledged or appreciated for their good work in supporting the issues discussed tonight. Mr. Neuman spoke about different social initiatives he is working with, including a youth basketball initiative that provides free sports to those without access. Mr. Neuman stated that a lot has been said about costs tonight, but questioned why there has not been a communication or dialogue with social initiative groups. He commented that he works within a church organization that has a complete wraparound model that helps a lot of people.

Mr. Neuman praised Mayor Alex Nuttall for being one of the only people to communicate with them and asked that they continue to do so. Mr. Neuman left his business card and invited people to get in contact with him to initiate a dialogue.

23 **Chris Gerrard, The Queens Hotel** advised that he has worked downtown for 36 years and is a proud owner of a property downtown. Mr. Gerrard stated that not all homeless people are bad, there is a bad element called lawlessness. He commented that before the COVID pandemic, there was a high-efficiency action team downtown consisting of four Police Officers, they were visible day and night and interacted with the homeless, the storefronts, and the community. Mr. Gerrard commented after COVID-19 a small pilot project by the Barrie Police has replaced it and since a budget was already in place and was approved by Council, he questioned where the money went and where those officers went. Mr. Gerrard acknowledged that Barrie has a great downtown space, but we need to provide a safe place for everybody. He commented that he is proud to be located Downtown, but they pick up 45 needles per week outside his building.

Mr. Gerrard shared that recently, one of his employees asked an individual who was injecting needles to move out of their parking space and that they came out of work later to find two car windows broken, resulting in a $900 glass bill which he paid for the employee. Mr. Gerrard advised that the people who broke the windows were identified by video across the street, but when the police arrived, they said there was no point arresting them as they would be back out that afternoon. He noted that employee has not returned to work because she feels unsafe to park in their own parking lot, seven feet from the front door. Mr. Gerrard expressed his belief that this is not policing and that if you do the crime, you do the time.

Mr. Gerrard voiced his support for a safe injection site and a rehabilitation centre so that people who want help have somewhere to go. He commented that everyday a homeless gentleman uses his washroom and has a basic shower. He is polite, courteous, and respectful.

Mr. Gerrard concluded that all they want downtown, is to be able to walk down the street and be respected and that we need more officers. He commented that if there is a presence of police, people follow the law, that drugs being publicly used downtown are illegal, and questioned why charges are not being laid. Mr. Gerrard suggested the use of special constables, like those that are used at the courthouse, and a fence at the Busby Centre to make its neighbours feel safe.

24. **Jennifer van Gennip** voiced her appreciation that the meeting order was rearranged to allow CAO, Michael Prowse to give his presentation before the public meeting. She expressed her appreciation of the efforts of County staff, City staff, and Council towards addressing homelessness. Ms. van Gennip noted that it does feel like homelessness has been reduced to a checklist and that most of the tasks have been checked off as completed and was wondering who is better off and how it is being measured.

Ms. van Gennip commented on the RFP for the warming centre requesting proposals for a portion of $100,000 and originally only to be triggered when the temp reached -15. She noted that a daytime contract is being negotiated now and the hope is that the expectation is seven days a week.

Ms. Van Gennip discussed the by-law changes and urged Council and staff to take a human rights approach and lean on the human rights commissioner. She commented on panhandling, noting a conversation with Mayor Nuttall this summer where they agreed that professionalizing taking care of one another was not the direction we wanted to see our community heading. Ms. van Gennip stated that the proposed changes are predicated on the idea that we are willing to abandon each other, and the hope is that the community response in June shows that we are not.

Ms. van Gennip advised that she is not dismissive of the experiences of fellow Barrie residents who feel unsafe in our downtown, but she does want to counterbalance it with her own experience. She discussed her enjoyment of the downtown with her family without incident and has never felt unsafe walking in the Downtown. She discussed people experiencing homelessness which makes her uncomfortable because she doesn't like to see people suffer, but being uncomfortable is not the same as being unsafe.

Ms. van Gennip concluded that she wants to advocate for permanent supportive housing and that housing is an incredible stabilizer and a lot of what we are hearing today goes away when we have permanent supportive housing.

25. **Stefan Aust** advised that he was born and raised in Barrie and has a great deal of pride in the City. He expressed his thanks to the City for first identifying there are issues at hand that need to be addressed, for starting the process, and by providing an opportunity for its citizens to provide their input on the issues at hand whether in support or against. He felt that the first step in finding a solution is to identify there are issues that need to be addressed.

Mr. Aust described driving off Bayfield Street each day, seeing people who are clearly in dire need which breaks his heart. He felt that giving a dollar or two to those in need was only a drop in the bucket.

Mr. Aust again commended the City for their commitment to trying to address the homelessness issues but that it is also a global issue.

26. **Susan Eagle** advised that every day City agencies, volunteers, faith groups, and people of goodwill reach out to lend a hand and offer help to people in our community who are vulnerable or in need.

Ms. Eagle indicated that neighbors, kindhearted people, and those who attend churches, mosques, and synagogues typically tend to help those in need. She expressed that being a neighbor and caring for the whole community is the only way the municipality can thrive together. She quoted Martin Luther King "reminded people that we can either learn to live together as brothers and sisters, or we shall perish as fools."

Ms. Eagle expressed her dismay that City Council voted unanimously to ban the use or distribution of tents, tarps, food, and grocery products in public spaces, without a permit but there were assurances the municipality would spend $825,000 for each of 2 years to provide homeless supports, but to date has only heard of one program being currently worked on. She discussed the family reunification program and moving unhoused people out of the City. She mentioned that she has nothing against family reunification but is it the best solution for someone and is it freely chosen. Ms. Eagle felt that several agencies in the city have been sensitively and responsibly already been working on this for some time. Ms. Eagle questioned if there were any other plans underway.

Ms. Eagle discussed the County of Simcoe's Request for Proposal related to warming centres and whether the funds will be shared across the five warming centres throughout the County of Simcoe. She felt that no warming centre could provide space, staffing, food and other support for the winter months for an average of $20,000. She expressed that she felt it was not a surprise to learn that no agency applied to provide an overnight warming centre in Barrie, given the inadequacy of funding but that she is pleased to hear that there will be some further negotiation and discussion on funding, so there can be an adequate warming centre. She discussed the statistics of the Busby Centre between August 2022 and August 2023 which provided shelter for 786 individuals at the centre and does not include the number of individuals supported by the outreach van. Ms. Eagle mentioned that the Busby Centre currently has only 50 beds which is a reduction since the beginning of COVID-19 when it was higher at 55 beds.

Ms. Eagle commented that at a time like this, the municipality should not be encouraging its residents to lose their neighbourliness but rather helping to lead the way. She quoted the words of Jesus "in so far as you do it to least of these my brothers and sister, you do it to me, resonates deeply".

Ms. Eagle stated the following:

"When we look at the challenge of homelessness and lack of housing in our city. do we target homelessness? Or do we target the homeless? Do we see creative community solutions? Or do we blame the victims? She discussed de-incentivizing and panhandling and advised that when you take away money from panhandlers, you are

creating one more desperate person. She described the lack of washrooms as being a lack of support for people who are homeless."

In closing Ms. Eagle expressed that she hopes City Council will step up, renounce its prohibition against caring for its neighbour, and use taxpayers' money to help our most vulnerable neighbors in need, with proper support.

27. **Christine Naylor, Co-Founder of Ryans Hope** described the organization as a nonprofit with a mission to advocate for and support people living with mental illness, substance, use issues, and experiencing homelessness.

Ms. Naylor stated that in the past two years, the organization has provided direct support and outreach services to the most vulnerable residents of our community, those who are unsheltered and living outside through the breakfast-to-go program, the evening street outreach, and the loads of love free laundry program in which they have direct contact with up to 200 people daily who are living unsheltered in our community. She indicated that the organization is 100% volunteer run and community supported and operates on a mutual aid model of neighbours, helping those in need is how to build a community, challenge stigma, and combat fear and ignorance.

Ms. Naylor discussed that she often hears on social media, and through this Council that residents are afraid to go downtown and cannot enjoy the waterfront due to safe safety concerns caused by homeless people or people who use drugs. She felt that the claims that homeless people and those who use drugs are dangerous and unsafe are unfounded and that there is a difference between being uncomfortable and unsafe.

Ms. Naylor indicated that those who have the privilege of being housed, and able to afford food, and those never touched by having a family member with mental illness or addictions who come face to face with the realities of these issues may make them feel uncomfortable and taken away from their enjoyment of an evening outing for dinner or coffee, but it should not be allowed to take away the human rights of our most vulnerable residents

Ms. Naylor stated that City Council has a responsibility to all residents of Barrie including those who are unsheltered, those living in encampments, living with mental illness and substance abuse issues, and their human rights should not be ignored, and the human rights of the community members who have stepped up to respond to the failures of all levels of government by feeding, clothing and sheltering.

Ms. Naylor felt that it has been statistically proven that those who are homeless and have mental illness are more likely to be victims of crime than to perpetrate them. She indicated that that have been

multiple occasions when the homeless in our community have been victims of crimes which include being harassed, robbed, assaulted or property vandalized. She stated that the organization has witnessed on several occasions during the breakfast program, buckets of water being poured onto those that they serve from a balcony of a neighbouring building. She mentioned that these homeless individuals had become accustomed to this dehumanizing behaviour towards them.

Ms. Naylor highlighted that her whole family is actively involved in Ryan's Hope and supporting the community's unhoused neighbours, and many of the volunteers bring their family members to volunteer with the organization. She advised that none of the volunteers of the organization have felt unsafe to participate, and all have enjoyed their experience. She noted seeing the beautiful intergenerational friendships form between volunteers and the people we serve.

Ms. Naylor mentioned that the organization participated in the community garden partnership with Trinity, Anglican Church, and gardening knowledge and life stories were shared and friendships formed. She felt that City Council should be bringing the community together to spell the fear and stigma and not feed into it and feel it. She felt that there are many proactive steps that could be taken to address the shortage of affordable housing in the community which would cost less and have a more meaningful impact on our community.

Ms. Naylor referenced Mahatma Gandhi "The true measure of any society can be found, in how it treats this most vulnerable members". She asked City Council to consider what kind of city are you trying to create, what you want to be known for our inhumanity, or the way we look out for each other. She also requested City Council consider the legal implications of enacting the proposed by-laws which violate the fundamental human right protected by the Ontario human rights called the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and International Human Rights law. She stated that as an ordained multi-faith minister that all major religions share the same core values to love our neighbours and to care for our neighbours.

28. **Angela Vas** indicated that she is Jordan's life and is justifying the right to defend against national stigma with learning initiatives and futuristic ethics. She stated that she is an advocate for prisoners. The drug poisoning and all those growing up against the challenges and society has created.

Ms. Vas highlighted that mental health is health and it all matters. She described her background as a healthcare worker, working with the developmentally disabled, palliative care, foot care, brain injury, and paraplegic care, behaviour management, and non-violent crisis intervention and person-centred plan kept her safe in her own private business in the community.

Ms. Vas described that she raised her two children in the community as a single mom and buried her oldest child Jordan at 26 years of age.

Ms. Vas stated that she objects to the proposed bylaws, and she sees it as a violation of Human Rights in which we should all have rights and freedoms. She felt that beyond that it amplifies a stigma, prejudice, and discrimination and creates hate, violence, crimes, and an overall community disrespect. She mentioned that respect is modeled by what the municipality shows, and what we do, and by showing disrespect for members of our community, we will be allowing ourselves to be hated and disrespected just like a vicious dog on a chain. Is it the dog's fault that he is vicious or is it the person putting the chain on him. She felt that it takes a lot more strength to live in the municipality with no home, no shelter, no food, and no way of doing laundry and living in survival mode every day, but in our society we are confused because we act like having a home, a job and address, and the ability to learn and thrive in a growing society is our strength. Ms. Vas indicated that there is not a one size fits all box in our society for mental health.

Ms. Vas stated that Jesus was hungry, he was homeless, yet we remember him with such authority in our lives because he shared his gift of love and humanity. God gave his child, he didn't give him bearing riches, he sent us lessons of love through survival and kindness.

Public Comments - Speakers 29 - 33

29. **Ash P** commented that throwing more hate at a problem that was created by hate and greed is not the answer, but treating it with love and support is the only way for the community to heal and be safe. She challenges each member of Council to spend some time on the streets, volunteer with those organizations doing outreach, and for breakfast to meet the unhoused members of the community which she feels has been neglected by the City.

Ms. P indicated that there was no thought on how these proposed by-laws would directly affect and harm the community and the real community. She discussed concerns related to the proposed by-law that could potentially make it illegal to give out food to anyone in need which she feels is cruel and how this by-law has the potential of separating the community. She mentioned that It's on the streets with neighbors helping, neighbors, housed and unhoused, working together to heal and grow.

The Community Safety Committee adopted a procedural motion with a two-thirds majority to suspend the provisions of Section 2(18) of Procedural By-law 2019-100 to allow for the continuation of the Community Safety Committee meeting past 9:00 p.m. for those who pre-registered to speak at the Public Meeting.

30. **Amy Pauley** indicated that she has lived in Barrie all her life and that she works at Trinity Anglican Church downtown. She mentioned a vision where everyone can all be together in the community.

Ms. Pauley indicated that she was moved by the people who experienced fear and being unsafe, and she mentioned that Trinity Anglican has also experienced some of the same issues and wants to keep her members safe. She described that the church has hosted the breakfast program and opened its doors to those in need. She indicated that she has talked to outreach workers, and they need help to help others in need.

Ms. Pauley discussed the family reunification plan as being the first thing done in the community and she feels that it seems like the City just wants to stop helping people and make them go away. She questioned the timing of the safe consumption site and whether the Province had been contacted regarding the status of the project.

Ms. Pauley discussed affordable housing being hard to build and that churches have offered the city help to build it. She indicated that there has been no follow-up from a conference that was recently held in Barrie which included County representatives.

Ms. Pauley indicated that plans are great, but she suggested that they be completed in an order that is humane and includes affordable housing/and/or safe consumption site first. She questioned where these unhoused individuals go when they are removed from encampments.

31. **Valerie Grdisa, Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Mental Health Association of Simcoe County (CMHA)** indicated that her organization was never consulted regarding the City's recommendation regarding Options to Address Chronic Homelessness.

Ms. Grdisa stated that CMHA serves 8,000 individuals experiencing mental health, substance related, and gambling issues in Simcoe County with nearly 5,000 being served in Barrie. She felt that affordable and supportive housing stands as a pivotal cornerstone of community safety and wellness, through the homelessness initiative, a rent supplement program in partnership with the County of Simcoe and the Province of Ontario and they offer secure and dignified housing for more than 300 individuals.

Ms. Grdisa mentioned that CMHA did look at some of their initiatives and would welcome the City of Barrie's request for an increase in funding for some of their proven initiatives, and they too have conversations with the Province of Ontario.

Ms. Grdisa expressed her appreciation to those members of Council in office during 2022 who approved the site selection for the consumption and treatment services site, but that was two years ago and still are waiting on the Province of Ontario's approval. She stated that CMHA is continuing to pay rent for the site, and staff at that site are continually harassed by residents who do not want the safe consumption site to be located there. She has tried to get the harassment to stop but feels that the problem exceeds mental illness or substance related problems and that there is something going on in society that we all have to take ownership of.

Ms. Grdisa discussed the opioid crisis, the pharmaceutical industry, and prescribers. She felt it was our collective responsibility to care for people who were lied to and poisoned by people they trusted.

Ms. Grdisa described CMHA's 10 year history of providing mobile crisis response team support, and their potential partnership with Royal Victoria Regional Health Centres on a pilot program on dealing with the acute side. She mentioned that CMHA has opioid outreach counselors in the downtown core, crisis support counselors, and brief service outreach counselors, but there is a need to optimize all resources. She discussed a release for custody program where we actually support people transferring from the Central North Correctional center.

Ms. Grdisa mentioned that CMHA is hoping to get final approval from the Province to fund the construction of six new beds which will be an addition to their six crisis beds.

Ms. Grdisa discussed the food security program called urban pantry, which provides food support to hundreds of families, including teaching cooking skills, and gardening skills, and their appeal to the City for temporary funding solutions which did not receive Council's approval. She advised that she is happy to hear that there is a focus on food security but does have concerns that their Good Food Box Program may end up having trouble with funding for the Program.

In closing, Ms. Grdisa mentioned that she is delighted to hear the different perspectives from everyone. She does feel that it is important to continue discussions on ways to optimize community-based services and supports that already exist to avoid duplications committed to a safe and thriving community.

32. **Elaine Gareau on behalf of the Simcoe County Kairos** provided a background of the organization and its membership.

Ms. Gareau described that in 2021 a number of our members were involved in the breakfast to go program first spearheaded by Christine Naylor, who went on to found Ryan's Hope. She advised that members of the churches have taken on the responsibility of serving breakfast to the unhoused and those in need from Monday to

Thursday since the spring of 2021. She commented that volunteers come face to face every day with the most vulnerable in the city. Ms. Gareau mentioned that you do not have to be a member of a church to become a volunteer with the organizations. She indicated that breakfast to go programs are not the answer to end homelessness, but they are necessary when our society safety net fails.

Ms. Gareau discussed the City's proposed by-laws, which she feels will not solve the city's homelessness, but only apply a series of band-aids to a complex issue for our city strategy to work. She felt that the city should review strategies from other municipalities which have worked since Barrie is not the first person to face this situation.

Ms. Gareau questioned whether there was a link between the County of Simcoe's 10 Point Plan to End Homelessness and the punitive aspects of the City's by-laws. She felt that input should be provided from all community agencies.

Ms. Gareau stated that community safety also means safety for the homeless, as they are part of the City. She questioned the status of the safe consumption site which research shows would address the core drug problem in downtown Barrie. Ms. Gareau also stated that financial support from all levels of government is needed.

Ms. Gareau discussed a story from the Global Mail outlining the strategy to dimmish homelessness in London, England, and that the strategy involved many institutions working in concert under a goal of driven leadership.

Ms. Gareau noted City Council intent to make a positive impact with those by-laws, but she feels a serious solution would involve engagement with many more people and resources.

33. **Laura Phillip** advised that she is employed by McCowen and Associates, a company that has spent millions of dollars investing in Barrie. She described her 35 year passion for helping those with mental illness.

Ms. Phillip advised that she has provided housing to people with mental illness through various programs such as through the Minster of Health and Long-Term Care which is community homes for opportunities and that these homes are licensed, safe, and secure housing with support for people with serious mental illness. She also mentioned homes within the County of Simcoe which are funded through the homelessness initiatives. She noted that over the last several years there have been holds on funding which means if a resident leaves, there is no funding for a new resident.

Ms. Phillip indicated that due to lack of funding, she currently has 15 beds available that would house the very vulnerable. She expressed appreciation for the County of Simcoe and their forward thinking. She

commented that the only way she can sustain her businesses is through capitalistic ventures that provide her with income to provide housing. She discussed concerns with increased taxes, increased standards, high cost of food and utilities, and money supporting programs that already exist.

Ms. Phillips indicated that the turnover rate at her location is very low, and she has had residents living there for 30 years

Ms. Phillips did request that when considering new programs look at the programs that already exist in the community. She mentioned that her office is located in Downtown Barrie and has walked by herself and does not feel uncomfortable, but indicated she still feels scared sometimes as she does not know who is around the corner, which is the reality. She described assisting individuals from the out of the cold program that has lived on the streets, feeding and even helping them bathe, sitting in the hospital while they pass away, and never feeling uncomfortable.

Ms. Phillips concluded that nobody wants to stigmatize, but that it is a society that stigmatizes, and that there are a lot of people in attendance that may have the financial means to help.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:19 p.m.

CHAIRMAN